



Introduction

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The following sections are an overview of immunization registries reproduced with the permission of All Kids Count, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the improvement of immunization rates in children.

What Are Immunization Registries?

Immunization registries are confidential, computerized state- or community-based information systems. In the *Healthy People 2010* program, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services set a goal of enrolling 95% of children from birth through age five in a fully functioning immunization registry, noting “Population-based immunization registries will be a cornerstone of the nation’s immunization system by 2010.”

Registries enable public and private health care providers to consolidate and maintain computerized immunization records on all children within a given geographic area. They enable multiple authorized health care professionals to access the consolidated information on the immunizations that any child has received. They help doctors remind parents when their children are due or overdue for immunizations. They help health care professionals stay abreast of the complex immunization schedule.

Why We Need Immunization Registries

The U.S. now enjoys the highest immunization rates and lowest disease levels ever, but sustaining them is not easy. One of the greatest challenges is the growing complexity and volume of immunization information:

- Over 11,000 children are born each day, each needing 18-22 shots by age six to protect them from debilitating, life-threatening diseases.
- An increasingly complex childhood immunization schedule makes it difficult for health professionals to keep up, even with the help of books, charts, and training.
- Families are more mobile than ever before. They relocate, change employers, change insurers, and change doctors with increasing frequency.
- Research shows that many parents whose children are not up to date with their immunizations mistakenly believe that they are. Many doctors also overestimate the coverage of their patients.

- Because of increasing concerns about vaccine safety, some parents, in the absence of disease, may not choose to immunize their children. Better data about the immunizations given can help address these concerns.

Immunization registries help to avoid the “peaks and valleys” of disease outbreaks by providing accurate, up-to-date information about the immunizations that children receive.

The Virginia Immunization Information System

The Virginia Immunization Information System (VIIS) is a population-based Web application containing consolidated demographic and immunization history information. VIIS is able to perform a variety of functions for health care providers, including:

- Recording immunizations, contraindications, and reactions.
- Validating immunization history and providing immunization recommendations.
- Producing recall and reminder notices, vaccine usage and client reports, and Clinic Assessment Software Application (CASA) extracts.
- Managing vaccine inventory.

When a provider joins VIIS, immunization data from existing electronic data systems is loaded into the registry’s database. In addition, VIIS receives weekly birth, death, and adoption data from the Virginia Vital Statistics database. New births are generally loaded into VIIS within two to three weeks. VIIS also contains all Virginia birth data from January 1, 2001, to the present.

VIIS is provided free of charge to health care providers in Virginia. To use the registry, providers are required to attend a VIIS training session and sign an enrollment agreement.

VIIS was developed as a joint project of the Virginia Department of Health and the Department of Immunization.